Margaret M. Smith. *The Title-Page: Its Early Development 1460-1510*. London: The British Library; New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 2000. 176 pp. \$39.95 (hardcover). ISBN 1-58456-033-9.

By explaining the development of the early title-page in printed books, Margaret M. Smith not only realizes her goal of relating the history of one area of book design, but also contributes significantly to the scholarship on the history of the book. In examining "the relationship between the title-page's origins and the emergence of printing" (11-12), she begins from the premise that the book, or any printed matter, was first and foremost a commodity in the economic marketplace.

After carefully defining her use of terms, Smith offers her theories as to how and why title-pages developed in printed books when they did not exist in manuscripts. She sees "the emergence of the title-page as a response (or set of responses) to printing – not a direct response to the technological change that printing embodies, but to the economics implicit in the technology" (12). Title-pages, she argues, gradually evolved as a result of the needs precipitated by the mass production of books inherent in the new printing technology. First, multiple copies of unbound books needed to be protected; thus, the introduction of the blank page prior to the first printed page. Second, mass produced copies needed to be identified, resulting in the modest brief label-title on the blank page. Finally, a stock of books needed to be promoted and marketed so that the printer and/or publisher could make a return on their investment. The full and sometimes decorated title-page, as we know it, became a useful method of attracting buyers. Smith supports her theories on the basis of a statistical analysis of a large sample of approximately 4200 editions of incunables produced in the period 1460 to 1510 as described in the *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*. She complements her analysis with an examination of editions in the *Catalogue of Books Printed in the XVth Century Now in the British Museum*, and with a thorough knowledge of the scholarship on books printed in that era.

In order to place her conclusions in the context of the period, Smith begins by explaining how manuscripts announced a text without the use of a title-page, and argues that some features used in manuscripts were subsequently tried in a series of experiments in an effort to introduce printed texts. With the help of graphic tables and many photographs of incunable title-pages in various stages of development (from the British Library's rich collections) she

demonstrates that the title page's evolution did not follow in a strictly chronological progression; instead, there was an experimentation in the content of the first page that persisted during the period under study, with some methods gradually diminishing and others increasing in use.

Smith also explains how financial demands influenced the methods of introducing texts. Since the reuse of available stock was an important factor in the economics of printing, much of the experimentation on title-pages was based on the borrowing of processes that were already used in the text of the book; for example, the introduction of a decorative border, which was already used in the internal pages of the work. According to Smith, the last stage of experimentation, that is, the introduction of decoration and more information, reveals the final role of the title-page: promoting books and attracting buyers. Smith points out that the inclusion in the title-page of the name of the book's producer as well as the name of the author confirms the printed book's status as a commodity in the economic marketplace. The publisher had invested in this commodity and counted on his name on the title-page to advertise his work. In her explanation of the economic risks which necessitated the marketing strategy of an attractive and informative title-page, Smith does not mention the custom of obtaining subscriptions before initiating printing of a work, as was common in early Upper Canada. Such a practice decreased the producer's risk. One asks whether selling books by subscription was practised in Europe in the incunable period, and if not, when and why it became common.

Smith's argument that the title-page developed as a result of changes due to the economics of the new print technology substantiates the view of the printed book as an economic commodity first presented by Febvre and Martin in *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800*, (originally published by Albin Michel in Paris in 1958 as *L'Apparition du livre*). Underlining the importance of the economic marketplace in the history of print, Smith's *The Title-Page* contributes to our knowledge of the history of the book, and at the same time provides an eminently readable treatise for those interested in printing and books.

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